

Women's Eyes on the Budget

The City for All Women Initiative/ Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes, a partnership between the City of Ottawa and the women's organizations, has reviewed the Budget Directions approved by City Council. Diverse women across the city are sharing their specific concerns with Councillors over the next few months. We wish to share with you here some of our over-arching concerns.

A Gender Lens on the Budget

To consider how diverse women and men would be differently affected by a budget, we are looking at it with a "gender lens". This means asking the following questions:



- How will women and men; girls and boys be affected differently?
- What impact will it have on diverse women as users of services and as providers of services?
- Does it support programs and services that foster equity?
- Will the reduction or elimination of a service result in women carrying an extra load in unpaid work, as primary caregivers and community volunteers?

On the budget process:

- We appreciate that the city created an opportunity for input into the Budget Direction prior to drafting the budget. We are pleased that the Budget Directions propose this be repeated in 2005.
- We are concerned that, in this new budget consultation process, citizens have lost the opportunity to present to City Standing Committees on the Draft Budget. This is a problem because the Health Recreation and Social Services Standing Committee is better informed about many of the issues we will want to address and has historically made positive interventions on behalf of marginalized groups at full Council. Having to present before full Council makes it harder to make our concerns heard.

On connecting with the Ottawa 20/20:

- We are pleased the City is planning to link the budget more closely with Ottawa 20/20 Growth Management Plans. The Ottawa 20/20 supports important principles and directives that ensure an inclusive and caring city which is essential if the diversity of women and men; and their families are to be fully considered in the budget.

On how the City raises funds - Revenues:

- **User Fees:** We oppose increases in user fees that make services inaccessible for low-income citizens. This is in direct opposition to the City's 20/20 Plans. We know what this has meant for families in Ottawa. We see the impact on our youth. In the event of increases in user fees for services, subsidies must be increased to make those services accessible.

- **More money from higher levels of government.** Let's work together to ensure that the provincial and federal governments fix the funding formula to make more money available for our cities.

On where the City spends its money - Spending:

- **Operational Budget:** Any new federal and provincial transfers need to be distributed so as to ensure that the Operational Budget gets its fair share. We need to ensure health and social services receive the same priority for new dollars as hard services like roads, sewers, garbage collection etc.
- **Maintaining and Enhancing Services:** Further service reductions are not a viable option. 'Maintaining' funding is actually a decrease in ability to maintain service levels for most community programs because of increased needs and costs. Any additional cuts will place an unfair burden on women as primary caregivers, along with other marginalized groups. Ottawa is behind other cities in health and social service spending, as documented in the Macdonald Report. It is time to make services for women, their families and communities a priority again.
- **Community Grant Funding:** This funding allows our city to respond quickly to emerging needs and helps fund innovative community economic development programs, youth outreach, and community initiatives that largely benefit low-income women and families. We support reinstatement of this program as recommended in the Budget Directions.
- **Gender Lens on New funding:** In order to be cost effective, we ask that any review of new funding consider ways in which diverse women and men will be differently affected. Three examples:
 - **Crime Prevention:** The Community Crime Prevention program presented to HRSS Committee on Oct 7th, was developed without consultation of women's organizations with expertise in addressing violence against women and women's safety. Will investing in this program leave less money for the community and women's organizations already promoting safety audits and crime prevention? Will specific safety needs of diverse women be taken into account?
 - **Child Care:** The federal government will begin to flow funding for regulated child care as part of the Multi Lateral Framework Agreement in April 2005. Ottawa's portion of this funding will be \$4.3 million dollars. However in order to access this money the City will have to first put its 20% share (\$1.98 million) on the table to draw down these new dollars. Some of this money will be used to shore up current spaces/child care programs and to expand the number of licensed child care spaces in the city which are greatly needed. We support the Budget Direction to allocate this funding.
 - **Increase transit services:** Will these increases be done in a planned and consultative manner that takes into account the ways that women depend on the bus to juggle work and family commitments. For example, one of last year's cuts removed evening service between an area with a large low-income population and that community's food bank. Working parents must now take three buses in each direction, often with their children in tow.

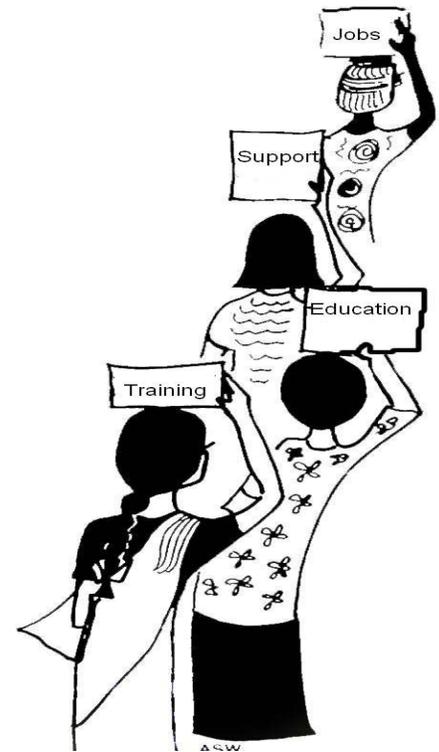
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EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS TRAINING

We Are Concerned That:

- ☞ High unemployment rates among recent immigrant and refugee women - 18% vs. 5% of the non-immigrant population
- ☞ The inability of diverse women to access/participate in employment readiness and support programs that enables them to go on to employment skills training and jobs that provide a decent living wage.
- ☞ Immigrant and refugee women holding PhD's unable to work in their fields; professionals working in minimum wage jobs; current employment and training services are failing to the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee women to prepare for find and keep work.
- ☞ Lack of information and inappropriate/inadequate outreach strategies impede women's participation in employment training, paid work, and self-employment.
- ☞ 2005 budget implications for employment, training skills and support programs and services for women.



Why are we concerned?

- Ottawa's immigrant population has been steadily increasing; growing at double the rate of the total population.
- Immigrant and refugee and visible minority women are among the most disadvantaged segment of our population. They often face isolation, exploitation in the workplace, poverty, racial prejudice and ethnic discrimination and impaired access to social services.
- If the City of Ottawa fails to take measures to address the gaps in current employment and skills training programs, services and supports for diverse women, women will continue to experience higher levels of poverty and isolation and the City of Ottawa will not benefit from the contributions they can make.
- More women will continue to live in poverty, isolation, insecurity, high stress levels and a sense of powerlessness that undermines their health and that of their families.

¹ Women's Place – An exploratory study of gaps in services: Mental Health Needs of Immigrant women in Ottawa Carleton, 1999

We Want the City of Ottawa to:

- ✓ Uphold the principles and strategic directions of the Ottawa 20/20 Human Services Plan and the Talent Plan by maintaining or increasing funding for employment and training programs in 2005 budget.
- ✓ Reinstate Community Program Funding to address emerging needs of diverse women and review longer-term funding strategies for job readiness and support services and programs.
- ✓ Apply a gender based analysis for current skills training and employment programs/services with goal to track outcomes for diverse women.
- ✓ Continue to collaborate with other levels of government and industry to ensure women's equal participation in the labour force - for example the Foreign Workers Accreditation Program and Partners for Jobs and Talentworks.
- ✓ **Make services for people a priority again; women depend on it!**



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SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We Are Concerned That:

- ☞ Every night women in Ottawa are not able to find shelter in the City's main emergency shelter for homeless women.
- ☞ There is a 7 year waiting period for subsidized housing in Ottawa.
- ☞ Single mothers with a large number of dependents (4 or more children) face particular hardship when they are unable to access subsidized housing due to the wait-list.
- ☞ Women fleeing from abuse are often ineligible for priority status for subsidized housing due to the inappropriate criteria for priority status that requires "proof of cohabitation" and a signed declaration that the woman will *never* return to their abuser.
- ☞ There is a lack of supported housing options for people who require on-going supports.
- ☞ Some women are afraid to move into subsidized housing due to safety issues and issues of substandard quality (e.g. incidents of violence, inadequate lighting, poor access to public transit system, inadequate maintenance of property, sanitation issues).
- ☞ Some women are forced to place their children in the care of the CAS because of their inability to secure affordable housing.



Our Vision for the City Of Ottawa:

- A city that is inclusive and reflects the needs and diversity of all constituents, men, women and children alike.
- A city where a range of affordable housing options are available to all constituents.
- A city where basic shelter and appropriate housing is not a privilege but a right.

A Range Of Affordable Housing Options Would Include:

- Shelters for people who are homeless, including shelter for women only
- Supported housing for people requiring on-going supports e.g. those suffering from mental illness.
- Subsidized housing for people with a very low income e.g. women and sole support mothers on a fixed income.
- Affordable housing for individuals and families with a low income

We Want the City of Ottawa to:

- ✓ Ensure that funding levels to existing housing and homelessness programs are, at a minimum, protected in the 2005 budget. Please note that the Women's Shelter lost \$100,000 in funding in the 2004 budget.
- ✓ Commit to working with relevant stakeholders in our community to develop a *real solution* to homelessness and the affordable housing crisis in Ottawa.
- ✓ Ensure adequate funding for emergency shelters for women who are homeless.
- ✓ Ensure an adequate supply of supported housing for women who need on-site services to maintain housing in the community.
- ✓ Increase the stock of subsidized housing to address the 7 year waiting period.
- ✓ Eliminate arbitrary and inappropriate criteria for women fleeing abuse, when they seek priority status on the waiting list for subsidized housing.
- ✓ Strengthen the City's 20-20 Plan to ensure that a fixed percentage of all new housing in Ottawa is "affordable".
- ✓ **Make services for people a priority again: safe and affordable housing for women and their families depend upon it!**



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ACCESS TO FRENCH SERVICES

We Are Concerned that:

The lack of funding for francophone women's organizations

- ☞ Francophone women's organizations have less funding support than Anglophone women's organizations. This imbalance increases the isolation of francophone women as they lack access to resources. Consequently, it is very difficult for them to become involved in the political, social and cultural life of our City.
- ☞ For example: In 2003, the drop-ins that offer Anglophone services received a total of \$1, 285,642 from the City through the funding envelope for Day Centres. Meanwhile, Le Centre Espoir Sophie, which is the only francophone service for homeless women in Ottawa, received a grant of \$30,000 as part of the homelessness initiative, mainly funded by the federal government.
- ☞ The lack of resources for francophone women is also felt in the families, in the neighborhoods, in the francophone community and, consequently, in the City as whole



Why are we worried?

- According to the 2001 data from Statistics Canada, 62,015 francophone women are living in Ottawa and 20% of all households are exclusively francophone.
- When francophone women are deprived of essential services, the city is also deprived of the contributions these women can make.
- Francophone women need and have the right to the same full-range of services as Anglophone women. The example of drop-ins, mentioned above, illustrates just one minute aspect of the inequity in funding and services that exists.
- The lack of funding accentuates women's isolation as they are unable to access needed resources. How can we expect women to become engaged in their community under such circumstances?



We want the City of Ottawa to:

- ✓ Distribute funds equitably among organizations that offer English and French services.
- ✓ Invest in francophone services to address community problems as it is more cost-effective in the long run.
- ✓ Reinstate the Community Grant Funding.
- ✓ **Make services for people a priority again; francophone women depend upon it.**



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PROMOTING WOMEN'S SAFETY

We Are Concerned That:

The prevalence of violence against women, and the effects it has upon women and their children:

☞ Of the almost 34,000 victims of spousal violence reported in Canada in 2000, 85% of the victims were women¹; four out of five people murdered by their spouses in Canada are women murdered by men²

☞ The Partner Assault Unit of the Ottawa Police Service handles an average of 2,000 cases of partner assault per year³. Ottawa's high case rate is the primary reason it has been chosen to pilot a new risk assessment tool (Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment)⁴

☞ Women's well-founded fear of violence limits their lives: 55% of women are worried about walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark; 79% of women are worried when walking alone to their car in a parking garage; 70% of women are worried when waiting for, or using, public transit after dark. Women's ability to participate as equal citizens is limited: 64% of women limit their activities as a result of fear and 51% of women just don't go out alone at night.

Why are we concerned?



Fear for their safety prevents women from participating fully in the political, recreational and social life of Ottawa; as a consequence, the city misses out on contributions diverse women have to bring to our city.

Women are afraid on the streets of this city!

Women's needs are not systematically taken into account in planning in the City of Ottawa. An example of this is the proposed installation of High Pressure Sodium street lights which are less effective in clearly illuminating an area rather than spend the extra money for the more effective and preferable Metal Halide street lights;

Many women are unable to leave situations of violence in their homes because...

The 65 shelter beds in Ottawa for abused women and their children are inadequate. Each year, more women and children are turned away by shelters filled to capacity than are provided shelter. Many turn to the City's emergency shelters for the homeless which are overcrowded, under-funded and are not equipped to protect women from their abusers.

Without adequate resources, women are in danger if they try to leave. Research has shown women are at greatest risk when they leave an abusive partner. Between 1974 and 1992, six times as many women were killed by their husbands while separating than while co-residing⁵

Immigrant, refugee and aboriginal women experience numerous barriers.

Many Aboriginal women and girls new to the city are denied adequate protection of the law, and are unable to access services, which means they are marginalized in a way that allows some men to get away with carrying out violent acts against them.

Many women stay in abusive relationships because they simply have no place else to go in the context of low wages, a shortage of affordable housing, waiting lists for subsidized child care which impede women from finding paid employment and training/education to support themselves and their kids

The result:

Many women remain in a violent home and continue to be victimized physically, psychologically, financially, and emotionally. Children who witness this violence against their mothers are significantly more likely to develop aggressive behavior (bullying, fighting), emotional disturbances (depression, continual fear, anxiety), criminal activity (destroying property, theft and vandalism) and experience negative effects on social and academic development.

***We want the City of Ottawa to:* Support programs that reduce violence against women and promote safety for women and children.**

- ✓ Uphold the principles and strategic directions of the Ottawa 20/20 Human Services Plan by increasing funding in the 2005 budget for organizations that works to enhance safety for women and all citizens, and who work in crime prevention.
- ✓ Support funding that increases access to services for immigrant, refugee and aboriginal women.
- ✓ Ensure that proposals on crime prevention and the reduction of violence against women involve women and women's organization with expertise in addressing violence against women.
- ✓ **Make services for people a priority again; women's ability to leave situations of violence depends upon it.**

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¹Statistics Canada (2002) *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2002*, Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada

² Statistics Canada. "Homicide Statistics 1998", *The Daily*, October 7, 1999

³ Partner Assault Statistics, Ottawa Police Service

⁴ Interview with Monte Kwinter, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on CBC Radio One, "Ontario Today", November 16, 2004.

⁵Rebekka Kong "Criminal harassment". *Juristat* 16(12) 1996.